



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI URGES SEBELIUS TO REJECT  
RECONCILIATION FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM***

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today urged Governor Kathleen Sebelius, nominee for Secretary of Health and Human Services, to reject the misuse of budget reconciliation to enact health care reform.

“Misusing the budget process to write health care reform behind closed doors is unacceptable and betrays the promise of transparency, bipartisanship and a new tone in Washington,” Enzi said. “We need comprehensive, lasting reform, and that will only happen through bipartisan action. I hope that, if confirmed, Governor Sebelius will urge Democrats to take reconciliation off the table and commit to working in a bipartisan way.”

At today’s HELP Committee hearing to consider Governor Sebelius’ nomination to head HHS, Enzi urged Sebelius to press Democratic Leadership in the House and Senate to join Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT), Budget Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND), and President pro tempore Robert Byrd (D-WV) in their opposition to using reconciliation.

“Using reconciliation shuts out members of the minority party, but it will also shut out many centrist Democrats,” Enzi said. “Chairman Baucus has said that health care reform through budget reconciliation would be ‘worse than the status quo,’ and Senator Byrd said it would be ‘an outrage that must be resisted.’

“I hope that Governor Sebelius will join Senators Baucus, Conrad, and Byrd in their efforts to prevent the use of reconciliation from derailing bipartisan action on health care reform.

Enzi said he is confident that if Republicans and Democrats stay on a bipartisan track, Congress can build on shared commitments to reduce the number of uninsured, contain costs, improve quality, and make health care more accessible for everyone.

“There are going to be areas where we disagree, but I hope that by focusing on solutions, we can produce meaningful results for hard-working Americans,” Enzi said.

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## **Statement of Michael B. Enzi**

### **Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

Governor Kathleen Sebelius  
Department of Health and Human Services Secretary-Designate

March 31, 2009

Mr. Chairman, I would like to begin by thanking you for holding this hearing today, and welcoming you back to the Senate. As I have said previously, confirming the President's nominees is one of the most important Constitutional duties of the Senate. I know that the members of this Committee take the "Advise and Consent" clause of the Constitution seriously.

What we are undertaking today is more of review of the nominee's qualifications regarding the substantive issues if she is confirmed as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. It should not be overlooked that the Finance Committee has primary jurisdiction over this nomination. Because of the overlap in our work and the significant role that the Secretary of Health and Human Services will have in the operations of the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institutes of Health, the HELP Committee has established a tradition of holding a hearing on this very important cabinet level position.

I would also like to thank Governor Sebelius for joining us today. I am hopeful that we will have a strong working relationship, as will our staff. If confirmed, there are going to be areas where we disagree – but my hope and expectation is that by focusing on solutions, we can produce meaningful results for hard working Americans that meet the test of the 80% rule.

People who have worked with me over time know that the 80% rule is one of the main rules I always try to follow to get things done. In applying this rule, I try to focus on the 80% of the issues the Senate generally agrees, while not fixating on the remaining 20%, which are divisive and can sometimes overwhelm the majority of issues that we agree on.

One area where I hope we can agree on is health care reform. Ensuring access to affordable, quality and portable health care for every American is not a Republican or a Democrat issue – it is an American issue. Our health care system is broken, and fixing it is one area where I hope the 80% rule comes into play so common sense reforms can be made. The American people deserve solutions.

I also hope we can agree on the process used to advance healthcare reform. An open, transparent process with a full debate is the best way to achieve a bipartisan product. I was disappointed to see the recent comments of the Senate majority leader, who suggested that he wanted to use budget reconciliation to pass health care reform.

Using budget shortcuts – known inside the beltway as reconciliation – shuts out members of the minority party. It will also shut out many centrist Democrats, who want to see health care reform based on a competitive private market, which is fully paid for. That is not a formula for bipartisan success.

At both the member and staff level, Senators on both sides of the aisle continue to meet regularly to discuss health care reform, and specifically what shape it will take. I believe that if we continue to negotiate in good faith, this process can lead to a bipartisan health reform bill that will enjoy broad bipartisan support now and in the future. I hope that Governor Sebelius will join Senators Baucus, Conrad and Byrd in their efforts to prevent the use of reconciliation from derailing this bipartisan process.

The next Secretary of HHS will undoubtedly have a critical seat at the table during these discussions. As the Governor of Kansas, the nominee before us had enormous responsibilities and has put forth her own health care reform proposals there. I know that we have a shared commitment to reducing the number of uninsured Americans, containing costs, improving quality, making health care more accessible to everyone and increasing access to health information technology.

During my initial meeting with Governor Sebelius we discussed the unique challenges that face rural and frontier states. People living in rural areas in Kansas, similar to Wyoming, face difficulties in access to primary care physicians and preventive services. Rural and frontier areas struggle to attract and retain doctors and other healthcare providers. In the 10-steps health care reform bill I introduced last year, I emphasized the importance of access to affordable health care for people in rural and underserved areas. Governor Sebelius understands the challenges in this area – and I am looking forward to finding solutions for this common priority.

We may not always agree on every issue. I am and will remain staunchly pro-life, and will continue to advocate for legislation to protect the rights of the unborn. My hope and expectation, though, is that we will focus on legislating solutions that will make a positive difference in people's lives.

I will have a series of questions for the Governor when we begin the question and answer portion of the hearing, and will have follow up questions for the record.

In closing, I would like to again thank Chairman Kennedy for calling this hearing today.

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